

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-19 (Canceled).

20. (Previously Presented) A method for treating an inorganic slurry to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, which comprises the addition to the slurry of an effective amount of a composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis(hydroxyorgano)phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant selected from the group consisting of:

(i) phosphonated compounds containing at least one tertiary nitrogen atom; and

(ii) homopolymers of unsaturated acids.

21. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the THP^+ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate.

22. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the THP^+ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, phosphate, nitrate or oxalate.

23. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a phosphonated compound containing one tertiary nitrogen atom.

24. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 4, in which the dispersant (b(i)) is a sodium salt of nitrilo-tris(methylene phosphonate).

25. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 5, in which the salt is the tetra-sodium salt.

26. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the dispersant (b(ii)) is a homopolymer of acrylic acid.

27. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 26, in which the homopolymer has a molecular weight in the range 2000 to 5000.

28. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the ratio of THP⁺ salt to dispersant in the composition is about 2:1 (as active ingredients).

29. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount in the range 10ppm to 1000ppm (by weight of the slurry).

30. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the composition is added to the slurry in an amount of about 750ppm (by weight of the slurry).

31. (Currently Amended) A method, according to ~~Claims~~ Claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a calcium carbonate-based slurry.

32. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 20, in which the slurry comprises a pigment slurry, a clay slurry or a cement slurry.

33. (Currently Amended) A composition for treating an inorganic slurry, the composition comprising:

(a) tetrakis(hydroxyorgano)phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is the tetra sodium salt of nitrilo-tris (methylene phosphonate) [[,]].

34. (Previously Presented) A composition according to Claim 33, wherein the THP⁺ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate.

35. (Currently Amended) A method of treating an inorganic slurry to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, comprising the addition to the slurry of an effective amount of a composition according to Claim [[34]] 33.

36. (Previously Presented) A composition for treating an inorganic slurry, the composition comprising:

(a) a tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium salt (herein THP⁺ salt) selected from tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate, tetrakis (hydroxymethyl)phosphonium chloride, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium phosphate, tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium nitrate and tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium oxalate; and

(b) a dispersant which is a homopolymer of acrylic acid, the homopolymer having a molecular weight in the range of 2,000 to 5,000.

37. (Previously Presented) A composition according to Claim 36, wherein the THP⁺ salt is tetrakis(hydroxymethyl)phosphonium sulphate.

38. (Previously Presented) A method of treating an inorganic slurry to maintain the slurry in a substantially homogeneous phase and to preserve the slurry against bacterial contamination, comprising the addition to the slurry of an effective amount of a composition according to Claim 36.